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ABSTRACT

This organizational analysis of Windsor minor hockey was conducted as a pilot study into the policy decision making process in a sports organization. The study was divided into three phases. In the first phase the organization was audited and provided with information about various feedback channels. In phase two observations, available techniques, and management and organizational alternatives were discussed with policy makers. Phase three consisted of a reaudit of the organization in order to evaluate the effects of policy decisions in phase two. It was found that some changes--for example, the use of half ice and no standing leagues--were in the right direction. There were, however, areas in which more change was needed--particularly concerning communication and contact between organizational components. Recommendations for change were discussed. (PB)

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SPORTS INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH/CHANGE AGENT RESEARCH (SIR/CAR)

WINDSOR MINOR HOCKEY

1972-73: AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS*

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Following a pilot project conducted during the Spring and Summer of 1972 in conjunction with Windsor Little League Organization, the authors were approached by Windsor Minor Hockey (WMH) in August, 1972, to provide an organizational analysis of that operation. This was conducted as a pilot study into the policy decision making process in a sports organization. The model on which such an analysis is based is that of Change Agent Resaarch (CAR), where the researcher himself functions as a catalyst, facilitating the directing change. The procedures followed constitute a three-phase organizational analysis with applications to all types of policy research: -

In Phase I an organization is analyzed (audited) and provided with information about various feedback channels. In Phase II pertinent observations, available techniques, management and organizational opportunities are presented and discussed in a series of clinics organized by and for policy makers of all types and at all levels. (The emphasis in this phase is on providing information and inputs likely to assist the organization to manage its own specified problems). This was in line with the recent Coleman report which identified among ten principles for policy research (American Psychological Association Monitor, February 1973):-

a) Partial information available at the time an action must be taken is better than complete information after that time.

b) It is necessary to treat differently policy variables which are subject to policy manipulation and situational variables which are not.

c) The ultimate product is not a "contribution to existing knowledge" in the academic literature but a social policy modified by research results.

Phase III consisted of a re-audit of the organiztion to evaluate the effects of policy decisions in Phase II. The purpose of the WMH study was to assist that organization in identifying its formal and actual goals, the conflicts or obstacles preventing goal attainment, and incongruities between organization-structure and the beliefs of individuals within the organiztion. Methods used to collect the information required to permit such analysis included observational techniques in, and following, the game, Semi-Directed Focused Interviews with members of the executive, officials, coaches, parents, and players as well as written questionnaires.

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Findings

There was general agreement on the major goals of the organization. The section of the league which had decided to diminish the importance of the game outcome (No Standing section) was found to have the most effective organization structure. (As a result, the (1973) season has seen an upward expansion of

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the No Standing section to higher levels and older players.) Conflict was identified between parent and coach arising from differences in beliefs, with coaches being more critical of player personality and skill development, and parents more demanding in their expectations of player performance.

All sections of the Windsor Minor Hockey endorsed the need for more communication and contact between the components of the organization.

SUMMARY

"If we begin with certainties we shall end in doubt but if we begin with doubts and we are patient with them we shall end in certainties." Francis Bacon.

The Problem

As a result of their operating in the past, Windsor Minor Hockey have become aware of the need to make their functioning more efficient. In particular, the question was posed: Are we going in the right way to achieve the goal of mass participation and maximal enjoyment for the individual taking part? Other workers in the field have reported a disquieting drop-off in participation in hockey at the age of thirteen or fourteen and many instances of failure by hockey organizations to provide for the felt needs of the individual participant whether the individual be boy, parent, coach or member of the executive.

How We Tackled the Problem

1. The first step was an anlysis of the ongoing operations of the organization (audit) and the immediate feedback and its effects that this provided.

2. The analysis was carried out by means of SAW, Seeing - observation through television and personal observation, Asking - interviews with those involved in WMH, and Written questionnaires. The data yielded by these processes was analyzed and statistics to show relevance of the relationships revealed were computed.

What Was Found

It was found that some of the changes made were in the right direction, e.g., the use of half ice, no standing leagues and other recommendations by serving to diminish the importance of winning clearly has a positive effect on the individual. The activity clearly became more self rewarding for many of the boys taking part and some information also pointed to the coaches finding the new situation beneficial and stimulating.

Future Recommended Action

We submit these for your consideration.

1. Expand the no standing league wherever it is felt possible.

2. Circulate an informal, chatty newsletter mentioning the names and activities of as many participants as possible to be directed at coaches and parents in particular.

3. Meet frequently in formal and informal gatherings with parents and coaches reinforcing their perception that all are valued members of the organization.

4. Make sure that scarce resources such as ice sheets are employed fully during practice sessions by having a large number of boys working out at the same time in various sections.

5. Develop the management by objective process initiated in the current year and supplement this with an increase in "bottoms-up" management wherever this can be implemented.

6. Conduct more clinics which examine the goals of the organization, permit discussion of these and increase the feeling that all members of the organization can help to formulate goals. Examine in these clinics also the social outcomes of minor hockey in the Windsor community.

7. Implement the existing research relationship between Windsor Minor Hockey and the Sports Institute for Research (SIR) of the University of Windsor. Continue to examine problems which have already been delineated and establish a relationship which will enable future issues to be researched and problems resolved.

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